Officials: Receipts up during ban

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ROCKVILLE — Restaurants in Montgomery County are thriving since the region's first smoking ban took effect in 2003, two county lawmakers said Monday.

In the two years following the law that outlawed smoking in county bars and restaurants, sales tax receipts have increased by 19 percent, according to figures released by County Council member Phil Andrews and former Councilman Isiah Leggett.

The figures show receipts from county restaurants rose from \$57.7 million in the 12 months preceding the October 2003 ban to \$62.1 million after the first year and to \$68.8 million after the second year.

Receipts have continued to climb in the first half of the third year as well, according to sales tax figures reported by restaurants to the state comptroller's office.

The Restaurant Association of Maryland, which opposed the smoking ban, disputed the figures.

Melvin Thompson, the group's government relations director, said one of County Executive Douglas M. Duncan's main pitches for the law was that 77 percent of the county's restaurants were already smoke free.